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STUDIES  
OF  
CONTEMPORARY  
AMERICAN COMPOSERS

BY  
JOHN TASKER HOWARD

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EASTWOOD LANE

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1925

J. FISCHER & BRO., NEW YORK

119 WEST 40TH STREET

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EASTWOOD LANE

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A photograph of a manuscript page, likely from a musical score or a liturgical book. The page features several lines of musical notation. The notation is composed of various symbols, including circles, dots, and vertical strokes, arranged in a structured manner across the staves. A horizontal line is visible near the top of the page, possibly indicating a section break or a change in the music. The overall appearance is that of an aged, handwritten document.

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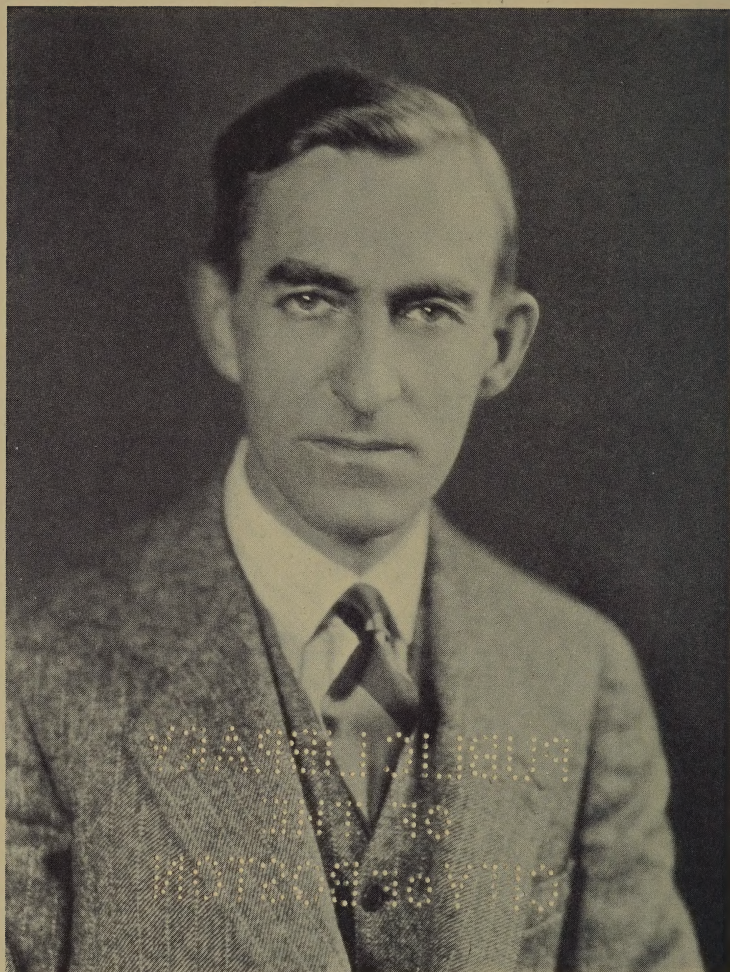
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EASTWOOD LANE



## EASTWOOD LANE

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UNTIL the last few years, the writer with a desire for accuracy was forced to refer, not to American music, but to music composed in America. When we speak of Russian or French music we have in mind a distinct nationalism, readily recognized by qualities inherent in the music. Our literature, it is true, possesses traits that may justly be termed American, but music is a younger art than literature, and it is but natural that a nationalist school of music should have been slow in showing itself in America. Especially is this true when we consider that we are not yet a race, though rigid immigration restrictions may so quicken the fire under the melting pot that we shall become a truly amalgamated people far sooner than we had anticipated.

While there have been numerous American composers of marked individuality, whom may we term American from a nationalist standpoint? Surely not Charles Martin Loeffler, for his sparkling brilliance is of a French vintage. Chadwick is far too academic, and as for our greatest composer, MacDowell, was he not more Celtic than American? And so it is with every native composer who achieved front rank prior to the last decade.

It has not been easy to determine from what sources our nationalism will spring. Some say from the folk songs of the Negro, the Indian, and the Mountaineer. Others claim that our feverish energy represents the American temperament, while

yet another group would prefer that our idealism be reflected in our art. The music of the Negro has already made itself felt, and our modern jazz follows in the wake of Negro rhythms and melodic idioms, combined with our own furious intensity.

It is probably in the latter direction that our musical nationalism will develop, for it is this element which not only we ourselves feel and recognize, but which foreign nations have definitely stamped as American. Hence the significance of a new school of composers, whose members are attracting considerable attention. All of them are comparatively young, they are imbued with the idiom, and, as a result, we have Dett with his *Juba Dance*, Guion with his inimitable arrangement of *Turkey in the Straw*, and, most important, because they are all made of original themes, a number of works by Eastwood Lane.

Lane is a picturesque figure in American music; his significance must not be underestimated any more than it should be overestimated. His importance is two-fold. In the first place, whatever he has written has something to say—it is vital; each piece presents an idea which justifies its existence. Secondly, Lane is one of the first American composers to show nationalist tendencies, and whether or not his work survives, he is making a real contribution by finding the way for himself, and pointing it out to his fellows. Lane's music is further remarkable in that it is the work of an almost untrained musician, so untrained, in fact, that he would experience extreme difficulty in calling by name a single chord in his writings.

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Sidney Eastwood Lane was born in the early eighties at Brewerton, N. Y., a small town near Syracuse. His father was a native of Otsego County, and his mother, Ardie Eastwood, was descended from one of the pioneer families in the central section of the state. Lane's great-grandfather, Asa Eastwood, was a confrere of De Witt Clinton and Andrew D. White. This



ancestor was also a member of the State Legislature, Tammany Hall, Society of Cincinnatus and was politically prominent up to the time he settled on the southern shores of Oneida Lake. Here he acquired an estate which still belongs to members of the Eastwood family. Lane's claim to American birth is therefore well founded.

Shortly after he was born, the family moved to a neighboring village, Central Square, where the father engaged in the hardware business. There was practically no music in the lad's early life. True, his father had a good tenor voice and sang regularly in the choir of the local church, but this was virtually the only music the boy ever heard. In the house of an aunt, however, there was an old square piano, and occasionally young Eastwood would amuse himself by strumming on its yellow keys. Such occasional adventures did not awaken any real interest in music; this was to come later.

At the age of eighteen, Lane entered Syracuse University and matriculated in Belles Lettres. He was never an ambitious student, and preferred to read and wander in the hills where Stephen Crane had loitered but a few years before him, rather than attend classes. The Belles Lettres courses included a weekly class in music, which had a reputation among the students for being quite easy. This fact probably attracted Lane's attention. He entered the class and although he never took its work seriously and derived little, if any, theoretical knowledge, it aroused his interest in music, and his latent talents.

It was while in Syracuse that he met a fellow student who was later to play an important part in his life. This man was Alexander Russell, a musician for whom Lane had the profoundest admiration, an admiration that doubtless stimulated him to effort on his own part. Ten years later Russell had become the director of music in Princeton University, as well as concert director of the Wanamaker Auditorium in New York. At Russell's suggestion, Lane joined him in the metropolis, became his secretary and has held that position ever since.

Lane never graduated from college, and at the end of three and a half years dropped out of its activities. During the next eight years he was virtually idle as far as the outer world was concerned—an inactivity made possible by a small inheritance, and what he himself styles an easily acquired indolence.

This inaction was objective rather than subjective however, for while some of the time was inevitably spent in the surrounding country, most of the leisure of these eight years was devoted to absorbing the world's great literature, to reflection, and, most important, to the acquiring of an æsthetic taste so necessary to the art of musical composition. He had always been an insatiable reader. In his boyhood he had been forced to content himself with a limited supply of books, but from his university days, with its added opportunities, his inherent literary taste asserted itself. Probably these eight years had a greater effect on the Lane of to-day than any other influence in his life, for the man is an authority on the literature of many nations.

Consequently music has no more mastered him than he has mastered music. He frankly considers his musical efforts an avocation and refers to his work in this direction as the diversion which gives him the greatest amount of fun. As a result, his compositions show a spontaneity that comes alone from the joy of writing, a quality too often lacking in music produced for purposes of earning a living. There is a total absence of self-consciousness in both Lane and his music, a naturalness that is the direct outgrowth of his own sincerity.

It was during the eight years following college that he composed his first suite for piano, *In Sleepy Hollow*. The work was published shortly before he came to New York. The subject was, of course, suggested by his reading; he considers Washington Irving's *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* one of the greatest contributions to an American folk lore.

In the four pieces comprising the suite we discern a refreshing spontaneity, a lack of sophistication that is at times



disarming. Salon pieces, of course, yet each possesses a substantial quality, a poignant message that raises it somewhat above the salon class. In his initial offering Lane seems to have something in common with Ethelbert Nevin, particularly in the gift of writing engaging melodies. At the same time there is a depth that Nevin's music too often lacks.

Each of the pieces is preceded by a quotation from the text, and each faithfully mirrors the mood. The first bears the title, *In Sleepy Hollow*, and the text, or program, is taken from the "Castle of Indolence":—

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,  
Forever flushing round a summer sky.

The piece itself is of the utmost simplicity, consisting of a drowsy melody, stated simply, without development, and, with the exception of an eight measure interlude, repeated three times without alteration. This graceful, restful melody has something of the character of Schumann's smaller pieces, and demonstrates clearly the composer's fluent melodic gift. Of course the literalness of the repetitions suggests a lack of invention on Lane's part, but the charm and simplicity fully compensate us for the absence of variety.

The second number is a boat song—*On Tappan Zee*, with a swinging barcarolle rhythm. Here again we find grace of melody, and a bit more of variety. The program is from Irving's "Legend," and the following quotation is given with the music:—

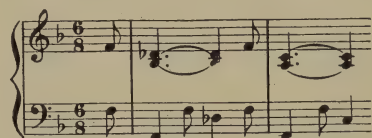
"The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down the tide, her sails hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air."

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN COMPOSERS

Lane shows his rhythmic cleverness by his initial statement of the melody:—



Then too, he shows that he has progressed in inventiveness by his handling of the second statement of the principal theme. The first time he states its second phrase thus:—



The next time it appears with the following variant:—



The composer demonstrates his natural feeling for graceful figuration in the following passage:—



There is an impression of inevitability in the insistent figure which re-introduces the principal theme:—





Altogether, *On Tappan Zee* is a delightful, lilting piece of music, with a buoyancy that is little short of captivating.

The third piece in the suite, *A Mid-October Afternoon*, is a reverie, affording contrast between the boat song and the brilliant waltz which concludes the set.

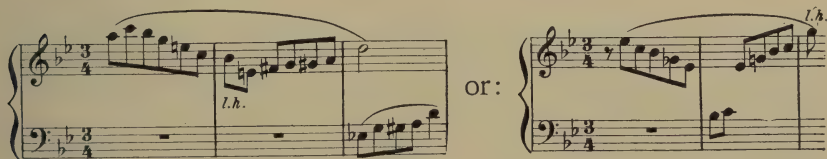
This reverie has a wistful appeal, and possesses a quiet autumnal charm, presented with a restraint that keeps it from becoming oversentimental. Again we discern Lane's love of repetition, for the seventeen bar melody is thrice repeated, while as in the first piece, an eight measure interlude provides the essential contrast. Lane is progressing, nevertheless, for he shows far more invention in the handling of his thematic material. Like its companions, the piece has its program, yet it may well be judged as absolute music, for it succeeds in establishing a definite mood.

The finale is entitled *Katrina's Waltz*, and is introduced by the following passage from the "Legend":—

"How could the flogger of urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? The lady of his heart was his partner in the dance and smiling graciously. Oh, these women! These women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquettish tricks? Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure the conquest of his rival?"

The waltz itself is brilliant, somewhat in the salon style of Chaminade, or Moszkowski. Here there is variety and contrast a-plenty, and the everchanging moods show the flirtatiousness of Katrina, as her encouragement of poor Ichabod proved indeed a sham to secure the conquest of his rival. The music sparkles, and its scintillating chromatic figures provide excellent opportunity for display on the part of the interpreter.

We catch but a glimpse of the later Lane in these early pieces. True, there is occasionally a figure characteristic of his later works, for he has never relinquished his fondness for sharply descending and ascending passages, like this, from *Katrina Waltz*:—



Harmonically the *Sleepy Hollow* numbers present nothing of a startling nature, and show little of the experimentation of his more recent efforts. The modulations adhere to well-trodden paths. Moreover the only truly American feature is the fact that they are written around American subjects. The musical idiom is by no means American. If we seek influences we may discern the flavor of Grieg, Schumann, MacDowell and others. Charming as is this music, it represents the formative period of the composer's career.

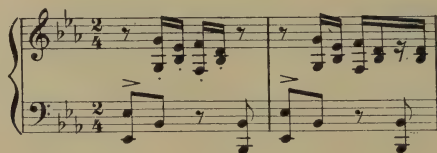
The national spirit, so marked in Lane, is apparent in the next piano suite, *Five American Dances*. These were published in 1919, six years after the first pieces were issued. In addition to representing native subjects, the suite presents a distinct American idiom. Just as Chopin idealized the dance forms of his day, Mazurka, Waltz and Polonaise, Lane has built his works around the popular dances of our own age—One-Step, Fox-Trot and Barn Dance.

In the first piece of the group, which bears the unlovely but highly-flavored title, *The Crap Shooters*, Lane shows his hand and definitely establishes his individuality. The composer himself writes of the piece as follows:—

"Ragtime and the game of craps have much in common; each is a peculiarly racial expression; each is ardently loved and indulged in with great zest by the negro. In the playing of either, the Afro-American is without a peer. 'Come to yoh baby', he cries, in the ecstasies of rag-time or the exquisite agonies of crap shooting.

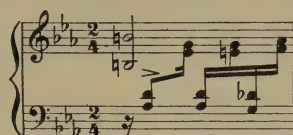
"In the latter part of this piece echoes of an old 'coon-song' are discernible. There are also in the syncopation signs of what H. E. Krehbiel, the late musical critic, admirably termed 'zoological friskings'. The composer waives the Darwinian theory and merely seeks to catch the spirit of the ragtime band and the game of craps."

Glance at the opening measures of *The Crap Shooters*.





and then observe the rhythmic snap of this measure:—



and again in this cadence:—



Rag-time in all its glory!

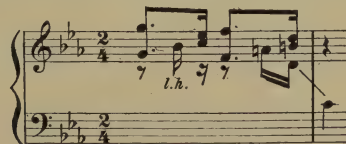
In a newspaper review, Gilbert Gabriel, the eminent critic and author, had the following to say:—

"After we heard Stravinsky's ingenuities we heard another pianist playing Eastwood Lane's *The Crap Shooters*. To American rag-trained ears there was practically no comparison. The American composer knew what rag meant—the happy-go-luckiness of it, the shuffle-alongness, the lilt and humor and tunefulness too. It was spontaneous, witty, tingling. It did not decapitate the sly delightful vulgarity that puts the best face on ragtime. It forgot, in its own fun, to be an exercise sheet, a trying ground for the studiously outlandish, which, at first hearing, was all the Stravinsky sounded like."

There is variety of rhythm too, as in the following measure:—



and which the earlier Lane might have written:—



Nor is this dance interesting from a rhythmic standpoint alone, its melodic outline is well-defined and characteristic of

the idiom. Melodically it acquires warmth in the contrasting middle section. The syncopation is still marked, yet the mood becomes one of reflection, and we note the "coon song" to which the composer referred.



In *The Crap Shooters* we glimpse several of Lane's musical figures of speech. Sharp and sudden modulations:—



followed by this abrupt cadence:—



Descending passage work, of which we caught a hint in his earlier work:—



Also a chromatic figure, inherited from the style of *Katrina's Waltz*:—



The second number is a dance-hall ditty, a one-step entitled *Around the Hall*. Here there are echoes from dance hall, cabaret

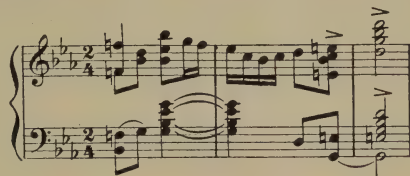


and musical comedy. Lane has adhered to the structure of the current popular song, with the "verse and chorus" idea sharply defined.

Again is the composer true to his type, as in this "vamping" accompaniment figure, with its chromatic inner voice:—



The following passage is further illustrative of Lane's dance idiom:—



The third piece, *A Gringo Tango*, presents Lane at his best. The Tango, of course, is a Spanish dance, but it has been highly popular in this country, and we have in some ways Americanized the dance itself. The term "Gringo" is the Mexican word for American, so *A Gringo Tango* literally means an American Tango.

For this piece the composer has written a languorous, sensuous melody that brings to mind a dancer, gracefully stepping and swaying to the insidious rhythm. There is abundance of contrast, yet perfect unity of the whole.

Lane's individuality predominates. Note this descending passage, introduced by a striking chord with its characteristic grace-note figure:—



immediately followed by this answering phrase, with its balance in an ascending passage:—



The *Gringo Tango* presents a feature not often found in Lane's writings—a coda, which, with its final *morendo*, brings the piece to a most satisfying conclusion. Lane's endings are sometimes abrupt, and while we may well admire his directness in leaving off as soon as he has had his say, a little summing up of what has gone before establishes a still more definite impression of finality.

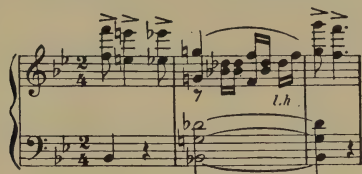
A *Gringo Tango* is a masterpiece of its kind, and has become one of Lane's most loved works. It often appears on recital programs.

The next number of the set, *North of Boston*, is a barn dance, fresh and buoyant. The title was suggested by a book of verses by Robert Frost, a poet whose writings depict the charm and rustic beauty of New England country life. In this section of the country, during the late summer and harvest time, the young people clear the great barn floors and dance to the boisterous tunes of a local fiddler. His body sways and he stamps loudly as he plays, and calls off the quadrilles and other old-time dances of the countryside. The composer vividly suggests the spirit of the season and the healthy fun of the occasion, for he even portrays the thumping boots on the old barn floor by the accentuated bass chords, which provide the accompaniment to a typically Lane melodic figuration:—





Again we find his love of syncopation:—



The fifth and last dance is entitled *The Pow-Wow*, with a sub-title, "An Indian Reminiscence." Here there is more variety than in any former effort, less of a reliance on literal repetition. Lane is becoming more resourceful.

The composer himself tells of the experience which suggested the music:—

"The American Indian shares with the negro a love of rhythm, but his lyric attainments are mediocre in comparison. The Indian displays a penchant for weird but simple tunes in the minor mode.

"I was once present at the annual Green Corn Festival held by the Onondaga Indians, one tribe of the group which comprises the six nations. While this tribe to-day boasts a modern brass-band, the monotonous thud of a tom-tom furnished the sole rhythmical and harmonic background for their ceremonials. The minor refrain recurring from time to time in the 'Pow-Wow':—

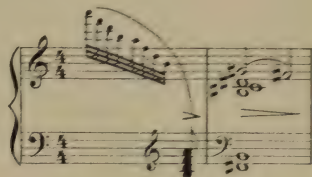


was intoned intermittently by spectators as well as performers throughout the progress of the dance."

These *Five American Dances* are American in every sense of the word—their composer is an American, the subjects are American, and the idiom is American. They will be a credit to their composer no matter to what future heights his genius may carry him.

Practically all of Lane's piano music has been issued in the form of suites. The only exception is *The Blue-Robed Mandarins*, published in 1922. True, this piece itself is one of a suite,

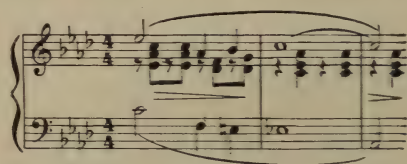
Mongolia, but the other numbers are as yet unpublished. The style of this work is somewhat akin to that of Charles T. Griffes. We find a number of Lane's harmonic *formulæ*, such as this sudden shifting of tonality:—



The composer also frequently indulges in successive ninth chords, in which he takes particular delight.

One of the unpublished numbers of this set is based on Richard Le Gallienne's poem, *A Caravan from China Comes*.

The next suite was published in the same year as the *Blue Robed Mandarins*, and bears the title *Adirondack Sketches*. In these pieces Lane shows us the product of considerable harmonic experimentation, and in some respects drops for the moment his intense nationalism. For example, *The Old Guide's Story*, the first of the pieces, returns to the Schumannesque spirit of *In Sleepy Hollow*. The later work is far more substantial, however, with a more extended harmonic vocabulary. There is also more inventiveness. Consider for a moment the halting of the rhythm in the second measure of the following:—



Like the *Gringo Tango*, the *Old Guide's Story* has a coda, which may be interpreted to represent the moral of the tale, accompanied by the inevitable knocking out of the narrator's pipe.

The second number is *The Legend of Lonesome Lake*. The composer attaches this program to the music:—



"Deep and dark, with its mirror surface reflecting the conifers on its precipitous shores, Lonesome Lake seems appropriately named. The story goes that a woman who was camping near by mistaking the cry of a loon for that of a child in distress, followed it through darkness and plunged over a cliff to death in the lake."

There is a beautiful lyric quality in this piece, which, while it makes no attempt literally to depict the story, establishes vividly the atmosphere of Lonesome Lake and the mood of the story.

The third is *Down Stream*, reminiscent in spirit and content of *On Tappan Zee*. The first two phrases again demonstrate Lane's ability to handle 6/8 rhythm without becoming obvious.



Again there is a wider harmonic repertoire, evidenced by sudden changes, such as this:—



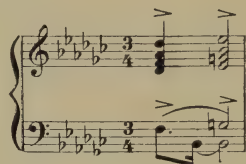
An effective passage connects the middle portion and the restatement of the principal theme, with just enough suggestion of the character of the first melody to pave the way for its re-entrance:—



Number four, *The Land of the Loon*, is a camp-fire story, written in narrative style, with broad effects. Only two pages in length, it is far from little in concept.

The fifth piece, *A Dirge for Jo Indian*, is perhaps the most remarkable of the set. It is written in honor of Jo Indian, a famous Adirondack Indian, who lived and hunted in the vicinity of the mountain bearing his name. Like Chingachgook, Cooper's noble character, Jo Indian met his death in a forest fire.

The piece achieves great heights in establishing its mood, and we find Lane at his richest harmonically. Take, for example, this sudden modulation:—



or the beautifully elegiac quality of these measures:—



Again we find chromatic ninths, this time with figuration:—



In the last number, *Lumber-Jack Dance*, Lane's national speech re-asserts itself, and we catch the boisterous gaiety of primitive revels of the spike-booted brothers of Paul Bunyan.

These *Adirondack Sketches* are not easy to play, but the talented amateur may derive the essence of their meaning.

In the field of song writing Lane has done comparatively little. There are three published songs. The first, *The Little Fisherman*, was published in 1918. The poem is by Dana Burnet and contains a spirit of whimsy faithfully carried out in the music. The other two songs are in more modern vein, and of



more contemplative spirit. One of them, *Summer Glow*, is a setting of a poem by the composer himself; the poem of the second, *The Gray Winds, Dream Laden* is the work of Cathal O'Byrne. Another song *Lisa*, a spring pastoral, is still in manuscript. It may be counted among the composer's finest works.

Two additional American dances have been completed and will be issued soon (1924). The first of these dances, *Sand Shuffle*, brings back the Lane of *The Crap Shooters*. It is a minstrel dance and depicts the shuffling of the negro as the sand is sprinkled on the platform for his highly individual demonstration of terpsichorean art. The piece itself represents Lane in all his glory, in his happiest idiom. How he delights in passages like the following:—



The second dance bears the original title *Persimmon Pucker* and brings a vivid picture of the self-sufficiency of the negro prancing in the ecstasies of the cake-walk.

Another charming little conceit by Lane is entitled *Knee High to a Grasshopper*, suggested by a delightful children's book by Anne and Dillwin Parrish. Pygmies strut and stalk in this whimsical little march. This work is still in manuscript, however, and many of his others have not as yet reached the publisher. They are well worth examination, nevertheless, for they represent a new period in Lane's development.

First, there is a charming *Colonial Suite*, which the composer promises will be released in the very near future. The opening number is *Plymouth in Autumn*, commencing with an austere, puritanical theme, with a suggestion of the Indians who harrassed the early settlers. The second theme is an inversion of the first, accompanied by rapid passage work.

The second number is entitled *A Minuet for Betty Schuyler*, and gives the Maryland colony its representation in the suite. This minuet is of traditional character, yet individual to Lane, possessing warmth of both melody and harmony.

The finale is *Down South*, representing the Southern colonies. Here is a wild, primitive dance, almost an orgy, interrupted for a wistful moment by a mammy's crooning lullaby. The idiom is negroid, with an admixture of a Scotch-Irish element, suggesting the negro slaves with their masters of Scotch-Irish stock.

Other unpublished works now in preparation for the press include two numbers from a suite entitled *Eastern Seas*. The first of these is *Sea Burial*, depicting with its austere character the chilly bleakness of the sea in winter. The rhythm brings to mind the swaying ship at sunset, and at the end a poignant climax with a rapid passage picturing the body slipping over the side of the ship. Then the tolling of a bell.

*Sea Burial*, together with *A Minuet for Betty Schuyler* and *Persimmon Pucker*, was scored by Ferdie Grofé for Paul Whiteman's orchestra and has been played with marked success by that remarkable organization throughout the country. To quote one of many laudatory comments, that of the music critic of the Detroit Free Press:

"*Sea Burial* has originality in nuance and the treatment of thematic material. In the smaller scope of this modern orchestra was portrayed as effectively as by a great symphony, a tone poem of the sea which in its impressiveness is a work Mr. Whiteman has a right to classify as serious music which must find recognition."

The second number of "*Eastern Seas*," *Off Yokohama*, is a scherzo based on material from *Sea Burial*. It is to be played at a rollicking pace, and is replete with Oriental humor.

There is also a ballade, *Abelard and Heloise*, based on the immortal legend of the monk who was driven from the Church because of his love for Heloise. At the close a chorus of monks chants the edict of banishment.

The composer was recently commissioned by Ted Shawn of the famous Denishawn Dancers to write an old time quadrille set for his ballet. The result is *Portland Fancy*—1854, which together with three of the *Five American Dances* employed as divertissements, occupy a prominent share of the program of this famous dance group. Dance and pantomime music seems a logical field for Lane's talents, for he is possessed of great imaginative powers as well as true originality.

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Lane's lack of theoretical knowledge in music has been a handicap that only true genius could have overcome. This insufficiency of technical equipment did not arise from lack of opportunity, it was more, perhaps, from a multiplicity of interests. Lane has never learned to read from printed music; not that he is unfamiliar with its notation, but his own creative mind is so active that after three or four notes from the printed page his own train of melodic thought proves an impulse too powerful to resist. While in college he did learn to play a Bach invention, after months and months of close application, but this was sufficient to Lane; he never tried again.

Natural genius often lacks the perseverance essential to mastering the fundamentals of art. Sometimes creating comes so easily the drudgery seems superfluous, even though the man possessed of the talent realizes that he might do much better in the end if he would but go more slowly at the beginning and equip himself with adequate means to express his ideas.

It may be that Lane will yet study the theory of musical composition seriously. It may be that it is too late. It may also be true that academic training would have made an end to his spontaneity, his utter lack of self-consciousness. It would probably not have killed his originality, however, for had he acquired a thorough technique when he started to compose, or should he find himself still able to gather together the tools of



his trade, it is impossible to foresee the heights to which his undoubted genius would carry him. Lane himself believes in thorough training for professional musicians, but he considers himself an amateur, entitled to the gorgeous sense of freedom that comes from knowing no laws.

In a lesser way Lane is an American Moussorgsky. Well may we hope that he will not need a Rimsky-Korsakoff who will take out much of the Lane to satisfy the academicians. Why not have a Lane who can not only brave the purists, but can defy them by meeting them on their own ground?

It is a matter of wonder to those familiar with Lane's music that he has been able to compose such pianistic music; passage work that fits so well under the hand. The student usually benefits by what has been done before him by studying the printed pages of the masters, and using their works as a model. As a substitute for this usual procedure, Lane uses the Ampico. Not only does he listen constantly to records of the world's greatest music, but in some instances plays them very slowly, fitting his own fingers into the keys as they are automatically depressed. In this fashion he becomes familiar with whatever type of figuration interests him. Such explorations are limitless in their scope.

Lane is of course well versed in musical literature; he has heard the best of music continuously since coming to New York, and his taste is accordingly, discriminating. Just as the blind are partially compensated for their lack of sight by a sharpening of other senses, so is Lane compensated for his inability to read notes by his increased power to absorb the music he hears. Thus has he been able to find models for his keyboard experiments.

His pieces are completely finished before he ever writes them down, and when he finally takes his pencil in hand his labor is indeed great. Each alteration (and there are many) is made before paper is touched, and the piece is worked out to its conclusion in the mind and with the fingers. His memory is

remarkable, his playing of his pieces uncanny. At the present time he has twenty completed compositions, not one note of which has been recorded on paper.

His own musical taste is highly individual. The classics he respects, but his interest is purely academic, he derives little inspiration from them. Whenever he attends a concert he takes with him a book for reading during a classic sonata or symphony. To him such music is useful chiefly as an accompaniment to another train of thought.

For the music of the romanticists and the modernists he has the greatest admiration. Chopin and Schumann are among his immortals, he worships MacDowell, Debussy, Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, and likens his idea of Wagner's immensity to a mortal's conception of the Deity. Half an hour of Paul Whiteman is akin to ecstasy. He considers Deems Taylor's orchestral suite *Through the Looking Glass*, the finest work of any American composer, living or dead, and Alexander Russell's *In Fountain Court* one of the greatest American songs.

Possessed of an intense nationalism himself, Lane is naturally attracted to Russian music. He feels that this is the most markedly national school in existence, possessed of an individuality that withstood even the Wagnerian era. There was a time when he admired Tchaikovsky, but he now feels that this man is somewhat morbid, unhealthily dismal.

Lane is interested in folk-music, but only for its musical and emotional content, never from an analytical or structural standpoint. He detests oratorio, chiefly because he dislikes the massing of voices in the formal gathering of a chorus. As for opera, he feels that the ideal opera should be little longer than *L'Oracolo*. He conceives of a music-drama in which a single tone will express atmosphere, an emotion or even action. In this ideal opera the *Leit-motiv* or recurrence of theme will be totally unnecessary because the ultra-musical sophistication of the future opera-goer will enable him to sense the composer's message from a single sound or unrepeatable phrase. Carried to its logical develop-

ment this principle would mean a synthetizing of music comparable to that of speech as advocated and practised by certain ultra-modern authors.

The inactivity of the years following college had its effect not only on Lane's general culture but also on the character of the music he was later to produce, for his music invariably arises from personal experiences, subjective and objective. True, this leisure earned him the reputation locally of being a ne'er-do-well, and he recounts with amusement the experience, some years later, of hearing a native say to a fellow townsman:—

"That's Sid Lane over there. Spends his time in Noo York putterin' 'round with music. Never thought he'd amount to nothin', but he seems to be gittin' along somehow."

Lane's taste in literature, cultivated chiefly during the idle years, is far different from his taste in music, if it is fair to draw a parallel between the two arts, kindred though they be. He is most catholic in his literary preferences. Whereas in music he has little interest in the works of the early classicists, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are his constant companion. Montaigne's *Essays* and the *Oxford Book of Verse* accompany him wherever he goes. In fact, every good book finds a warm place in his affections.

He practices what he terms seasonal reading. Each spring he enjoys re-reading *Richard Feverel*, a chapter of which provides a perfect pastoral for a May morning, establishing its atmosphere for the meeting of Lucy and Richard. In autumn he turns to the second chapter of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and the inevitable *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

The theatre has a charm for him that is almost enchantment. His passion is fanciful plays, the whimsicalities of Barrie, or the recent *Beggar on Horseback*. For sordid realism he has little use. The unlovely facts of every-day life must be presented satirically to satisfy Lane.

His love of nature and especially his fondness for trout fishing are Lane's great, fundamental passions. In fact, when he refers to music as his principal diversion, he qualifies his



predilection by stating that his love of music comes next to his love of the fly rod. When in town he spends every week end roaming about the hills of Westchester, and as soon as summer comes he betakes himself to his beloved Adirondacks, not to return until his autumn activities force him home.

His life in New York is characteristic. He attends concerts whenever the programs contain something of interest to him. In the ten years he has been connected with the Wanamaker Auditorium activities, he has come to know practically every author in the United States, and nearly every musician of prominence. He does not seek his friends among musicians exclusively, however, and though he numbers many of them among his closest and fondest associates, a man of Lane's broad culture finds kindred souls in varied walks of life. Bohemia, as it is commonly conceived, has little attraction for Lane; he has an utter horror of the studio party.

The influence of his pantheism and literary tastes upon his music are apparent to all who make a study of his writings. The mere names of his pieces show where his interests lie. The music tells us of the man himself. The composer with a vital message invariably pens his autobiography as he composes.

Lane never names a piece after he has written it, as did Robert Schumann. He will conceive a subject for a composition months and sometimes several years before he invents a theme for the piece itself. In this sense his music is invariably program music, although it paints a picture or establishes a mood, rather than attempting to narrate a story. Lane holds that all music is program music. Where no program is indicated by the composer, one will be automatically created by the listener.

Lane feels that anyone should compose who feels the urge. Why not? Everyone writes plays or novels. But, he cautions, he who composes should never feel chagrin if the public or the publishers fail to appreciate the results. It should be viewed solely as a matter of self-expression.

## CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN COMPOSERS

Lane the composer, is blessed with natural talents amounting to genius—talents which properly and logically developed may lead him to Parnassus. Lane, the man, is an education to all who know him well, a lover of the arts, a lover of nature, a mortal fully equipped to drink to the full what nature, art, literature and music may provide him.



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